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ABSTRACT

This paper examines West Germany's educational system by discussing the status of K-12 political and social studies education. It was not until the late 1960s that social studies education was introduced as a subject on a wide scale into West Germany's school curriculum. The reason for its introduction and development was the desire to supplement the traditional German conception of a democratic state with elements of American democracy as a way of life. Empirical studies dealing with the results of political education from the 1960s indicate that attitudes regarding more democracy, less prejudice, and a greater readiness to criticize and participate in the political process have not changed much. This is due to several factors: the lack of a central institution which would determine objectives of social studies education and deal with pedagogical and methodological problems; the lack of special training of many teachers in social studies; and the tendency of many tenured teachers to rely mainly on poorly written textbooks and not to utilize audiovisuals and other supplementary materials. Two reactions to the paper are also included. (Author/RM)

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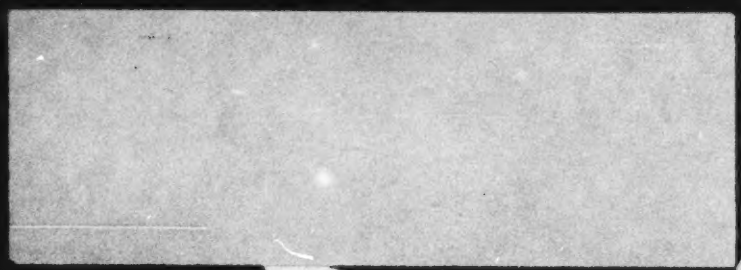

POLITICAL EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOLS OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

Friedrich Minssen

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Critical comment on Dr. Minssen's paper is offered by Wayne Dumas, University of Missouri-Columbia, and Bernhard Sutor, Staatliches Studienseminar Mainz.

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Inquiries should be addressed to the Institute of German Studies or to the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung.

Political Education in the Schools of the Federal Republic of Germany: The Framework of Conditions

Friedrich Minssen

0. Constitution and Political System

The Basic Law (i.e. the constitution) of the Federal Republic of Germany states that all types of formal education are the prerogative of the eleven states (Länder). It defines education--meaning here the raising of children--as a primary right and duty of the parents, thus excluding education by state or party as practiced in communist and fascist countries.

Throughout the Federal Republic of Germany all educational activities must be in keeping with the constitutionally guaranteed principles of the dignity of man; religious, racial, and social tolerance; personal, political, and artistic freedom; and respect for the unhindered "development of personality." These principles apply particularly to instruction in the schools which must not only be non-partisan but must also encourage, not limit in any way, the personal growth of the child as a future citizen.

Parliamentary legislation at the Länder level has contributed less to the structure of the educational system, at least until now, than the bureaucracies of the eleven ministers of education. They are responsible for many key decisions relating to the rules and regulations as well as the curricula in the school systems.

Since the "Basic Law" refrains from being prescriptive in this respect, the ministers have decided at their own initiative to set up an instrument of coordination: "The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education of the Federal Republic of Germany." This body functions well, though somewhat slowly. Its "Recommendations," which must be passed unanimously, can become law only if legislation is enacted at the state level. It is only since 1969 that the Federal Government may, by constitutional amendment (Art. 91 b), "by means of agreements cooperate (with the governments of the Länder) regarding educational planning and research projects of more than regional significance."

Nevertheless, the problem of efficient and expedient work, e.g. in the field of school reform, is still unresolved; similarly, parliamentary legislation still falls short of playing its legitimate role in this process.

For the time being, educational affairs still lack transparency within the German political system and the same can be said of broad public response and support. On the other hand, the constitutional framework has found nearly unanimous acceptance when it comes to the spirit in which education should be conducted.

1. Historical Background of Political Education

In contrast to the U.S., political education (Politische Bildung) as a subject was introduced on a wider scale in West Germany's school curricula not before the end of the sixties. It was then usually called Social Studies, Civics, Society, or the like. However, there were at least a few precedents as early as 1946 and during the mid-fifties, e.g. in Rhineland-Palatinate.

This does not mean, of course, that political education was altogether absent from the school syllabus during the Empire, the Weimar Republic, the Nazi era, or in the early days of the Federal Republic. Political education was taught, however, by what one might call an act of self-denial; it was taught in the context of an educational system which, although it was held to be unpolitical, was nevertheless marked by generally determined preferences, particularly in these allegedly unpolitical subjects: History and German.

During the Empire (1871-1918) special emphasis was placed on teaching loyalty to the state and to the dynasty. During the Weimar Republic (1919-1933), a weak attempt was made to instill the democratic "spirit of Weimar" in the younger generation by introducing Citizenship as a subject; however, it was taught only one hour each week during a given school year and in many cases it assumed the form of studying the constitution, or it was not offered at all. This attempt remained practically without consequences because it found little appeal or support among the teachers, the majority of whom came from middle-class background and who were, being still very much under the impression of the defeat and its consequences, in opposition against a weak democracy. Germany's military and political defeat had remained incomprehensible for the majority of the German people. It was for this reason that the Germans--not only in the schools, but particularly at the Gymnasium --chose to be "conservative to the core" ("konservativ bis auf die Knochen").

In National Socialist Germany (1933-1945), everything became openly politicized. National Socialism taught the doctrine of the Nazi movement at all levels and in all subjects, but now the middle-class conservative attitudes particularly of the older teachers sometimes served as a braking device.

After 1949, during the first years after it was founded, the Federal Republic was characterized by widespread support for a conservative frame of mind and, thus, by an emphasis on its short democratic tradition. This led to a reinstatement of the unpolitical school of the Weimar past. That type of school had adhered to the principle that the framework of a traditional school system would implicitly support a free, democratic order, precisely because it was unpolitical. This explains why it was only in Hesse and in the city states (Bremen, Hamburg, West Berlin) where political education and social studies had been introduced as separate subjects immediately after 1945, because the Social Democrats, who were in power in those states, were more critical of that tradition as a result of their painful experiences.

Generally speaking, we can observe in West Germany a strange relationship between cause and effect, between the intentions of political education and its results. The Empire has given birth to liberal republicans; the Weimar Republic had produced National Socialists; and the experience with Nazism had consolidated the sympathies for a free, democratic, and social state (Sozialstaat) which was to be based on constitutional rights and which came into being in the Federal Republic of Germany. Over the last few years, the schools of that state produced an increasing number of young intellectuals who, influenced by Marxism or neo-Marxism in its various colorings, endeavor to overcome the "system" of the Federal Republic. It seems that school education in Germany has once again produced the opposite of what it intended.

For a new type of political education as a subject in the schools the breakthrough came in the early sixties through the so-called "Saarbrücken Agreements for School Curricula" (Saarbrücker Rahmenvereinbarungen) of the ministers of education. They led to the introduction of social studies (Gemeinschaftskunde) as an obligatory subject for the last three years in the Gymnasium. This subject was supposed to combine history, geography, and political education, i.e. social studies in an integrated sense. The exact nature of the expected integration of those three subjects was admittedly left open, so that in practice the predominance of the traditional way of teaching history prevailed for a considerable length of time.

During the sixties, social studies (Gesellschaftslehre) was also introduced into the lower grades and into other types of secondary, even primary schools; but it did not take very long until the prevailing traditional methods of teaching became problematic when applied to that new subject. At the same time, as a reaction against the traditional approach in the past and during the time of the Cold War, which showed a strong positive emphasis on tradition, a new attitude was soon to be observed, at least among the younger teachers. It was supported by the student movement of the New Left, calling itself "critical," "critical of social conditions," "progressive," and "emancipatory"--in other words, it was influenced by neo-Marxist ideas. However, at about the same time, the conceptions of the fundamental order of human society were also seen increasingly controversial; that is why this new school subject, whose introduction almost ten years ago was agreed upon by almost all political groups, now became itself the subject of passionate controversy among a wider public as well.

2. Germany's Political Culture

The conceptualization of social goals and the strategies employed for their implementation, but also success and failure of political education in the schools of the Federal Republic have become intelligible if seen against the background of a general interdependency in the social system as defined by the term "political culture."

That interdependency allows us to consider institutional, organizational, social, and politico-economic structures as psycho-social dimensions of interaction in a functional framework. It can be used to define not only Germany's political culture but also political detachment and allegedly limited dependencies. For lack of a better summary, the following excerpt from the famous work by Almond and Verba needs to be quoted:

"Germany: Political Detachment and Subject Competence.

Germany is a technologically advanced nation with a highly developed and widespread educational and communications system. It had a bitter and traumatic political history before the founding of the present republic: a humiliating defeat in World War I, an abortive experiment in democracy, the Nazi dictatorship, the devastation and national division at the end of World War II. Both her technological advance and her traumatic history are reflected in Germany's political culture.

The high level of development in the communications and educational fields is reflected in the fact that most Germans are aware of and well informed about politics and government. In a number of ways they take part in the political system. The frequency of voting is high, as is the belief that voting is an important responsibility of the ordinary man. And their level of exposure to political material in the mass media of communications is high. Furthermore, German political culture is characterized by a high level of confidence in the administrative branches of government and a strong sense of competence in dealing with them.

Yet the contemporary political culture also reflects Germany's traumatic political history. Awareness of politics and political activity, though substantial, tend to be passive and formal. Voting is frequent, but more informal means of political involvement, particularly political discussion and the forming of political groups, are more limited. Germans are often members of voluntary associations, but rarely active within them. And norms favoring active political participation are not well developed. Many Germans assume that the act of voting is all that is required of a citizen. And Germany is the only nation of the five studied in which a sense of administrative competence occurs more frequently than a sense of political competence. Thus, though there is a high level of cognitive competence, the orientation to the political system is still relatively passive--the orientation of the subject rather than of the participant.

Germany's traumatic political history affects other important characteristics of the political culture. Though there is relatively widespread satisfaction with political output, this is not matched by more general system affect. Germans tend to be satisfied with the performance of their government, but to lack a more general attachment to the system on the symbolic level. Theirs is a highly pragmatic --probably overpragmatic--orientation to the political system; as if the intense commitment to political movements that characterized Germany under Weimar and the Nazi era is now being balanced by a

detached, practical, and almost cynical attitude toward politics. And the attitudes of the German citizen to his fellow political actors are probably also colored by the country's political history. Hostility between the supporters of the two large parties is still relatively high and is not tempered by any general social norms of trust and confidence. And the ability of Germans to cooperate politically also appears to have serious limitations." (Source: The Civic Culture, Boston, 1965, pp. 312 f., first published in 1963; the other nations treated are the U.S., Great Britain, Italy, and Mexico).

The American characterization of German political culture refers to the early sixties. If we reduce this analysis to its decisive points, we find this:

1. A relatively high level of political information and of possibilities of communication which correspond to a relatively high level of participation; the latter, however, remains passive, superficial, formal; one could say the average German is one who votes for and who believes in authority, not one who is politically active and critical of authority; he is less interested in the political processes themselves than in their results at the institutional level and in the institutions proper.

2. On a symbolic level, a close relationship with the political order is lacking; in other words, there is no identification of the citizen with the system as a whole.

3. Communication and cooperation between the social and political groups is not functioning optimally; the social cathexis is disturbed and is obstructed by lack of trust.

A discussion whether this diagnosis is still valid today would surely be interesting. In the context of our subject, which is determined with general conditions of political education, it may be accepted as it is. This seems possible because it contributes to the understanding of the objectives of, and impediments to, political education at a crucial time in history, namely the last two decades.

The characterization undoubtedly refers to Anglo-Saxon models of society; it clarifies, nevertheless, a series of deficits which have been used as stimuli and as countervailing aims for political education in postwar West Germany. It must be admitted that the results of this educational approach were naive and quite superficial, at least at the beginning. They proved incapable of dealing with the basic structures.

Generally speaking, the guiding impulse that led to the introduction and development of political education into the schools of the Federal Republic can be characterized by the desire to supplement the traditional German conception of a democratic state with elements of the American democracy as a way of life. This tendency begins with Friedrich Oetinger's (Theodor Wilhelm's) subsumption of political education under "partnership" during the first few years after the war and finds its provisional climax in Willy Brandt's challenge "to practice more democracy" in his 1969 policy statement as Federal Chancellor. Democracy is not understood merely as a constitutionally regulated

relationship between the citizen and the expressly political institutions of his society; democracy is seen primarily as a type of behavior prevalent in all sectors of a society where free citizens are dealing with each other in a rational manner and on the basis of equality. The latter, according to Jürgen Habermas, expresses itself specifically in critical discussions--that is, in a "discussion free of repression" which he recommends as an ideal rule to be applied one day to all decisions of common importance in society.

In this effort to rebuild the foundations of social and political life, the Germans had to take into account their recent experiences. In particular, one hard lesson had to be learned after two world wars, namely that their traditional political culture--the very same which had become a threat not only to their own existence--had to be changed.

In spite of substantial efforts, democracy as opportunity for an open "discussion free of repression"--a continuous dialogue about all common concerns between all citizens--does not yet exist: democracy in the Federal Republic still lacks a number of necessary prerequisites --less de iure, of course, but de facto. It is not generally known that equality before the law and freedom of discussion were guaranteed even during the Empire, as is manifested in most Länder constitutions dating from the time after the revolution of 1848. Nevertheless, there existed at least one grave political inequality which provoked a continuous schism in German political life: the three-class franchise for the Prussian Landtag. This rule, which was in affect from 1847 to 1917, can be seen as a flagrant contradiction to the egalitarian election rules for the Imperial Diet (Reichstag). From 1871 (or 1867) to 1918 this body was elected through secret balloting by general, unrestricted, equal suffrage (according to the French model of Napoleon III). However, there was no correlation whatsoever between the legally guaranteed egalitarian and, since 1918, the political superstructure on the one hand and the institutional infrastructure on the other.

As far as material wellbeing in the Federal Republic in the mid-seventies is concerned, we can hardly speak any longer of truly disconcerting grievances or any other material deficiencies which might seriously impede social equality and political decision making. However, a set of traditional and well entrenched patterns in the hierarchy of social structures as well as a considerable imbalance in the distribution of income, wealth, and power have proven to be considerable obstacles for the process of democratization which is underway. Unrestricted forms of interaction between the citizens of the Federal Republic, independent of social rankings and groupings, are at best at an initial stage of development.

Language, as one form of interaction, is posing particular difficulties. Communication between the various social groups and social strata is to a large extent determined by the social structure itself; a common language for common concerns is largely lacking.

The objective of political education in the Federal Republic is

to contribute to the abolition of the aforementioned deficiencies. In the course of time it has become clear that it does not suffice to merely inform about facts illustrating a desire for more democracy; it was felt that education was also necessary--not only from a cognitive but also from an affective as well as pragmatic point of view. Only in this manner would it be possible to approximate our political culture, which is still determined by authoritarian patterns, with those of a free, fundamentally democratic society.

The real difficulty in this undertaking lies in the realization that political education with this type of objective is in fact forced "to swim against the current." Conceived under the premise of intending "to change the system," it therefore becomes necessary for political education to adapt itself to the conditions of that system, if it wishes to change anything at all. This endeavor reminds one of the legendary German Baron von Münchhausen who got stuck in the bog and who succeeded in pulling himself out by his own hair. One might add that political education is also faced with the task of draining the bog at the same time.

3. Structural Changes Through the School?

One might ask if a deliberate structural change within a political culture is really possible. Can it be achieved through the teaching and learning process in the school? And how far is it possible through the school?

Fundamental changes in the political culture have occured within historical times--one might say, under our very eyes. They were quite often the result of revolutions, such as in the U.S., France, or the Soviet Union; occasionally they resulted from a long evolution as in Great Britain and Sweden. Israel may be mentioned as an example of a deliberate, partly "constructed" change.

In all these changes the educational institution, particularly the schools, have cooperated in varying degrees and with varying intensity in each case. It should be noted that schooling takes different organizational forms in different civilizations and has, in addition, a different social relevance. The school is always only one socializing agency among others, and it is surely not the one with the greatest effect upon socialization and personalization.

The family, peer groups, the media, and the working environment have deeper effects--some because they begin earlier, others because, unlike the school, they are not restricted to a limited period of life.

The German school is--in contrast to the American high school --only a morning school. It is still conceived essentially as an instructional teaching institution. Extracurricular activities are hardly known; therefore the German school, in contrast to its American counterpart, leaves the development of social forms of interaction, which implies other spheres than the merely personal one, to a free play of forces. The latter exert their influence somewhere in the family circle or among the juveniles themselves and to a much lesser

degree in the schools. One can sense even today that the American school was originally determined and supported by independent citizens of independent communities with the purpose of educating like-minded citizens; in sharp contrast, the German school was developed by the sovereign who expected it to breed industrious and obedient subjects.

4. The Vertical School System

During the period of restoration after 1945, which extended right into the sixties, the states of the Federal Republic did not change the vertically structured class-school based on the three estates of the early 19th century; instead they reintroduced it. Those three estates were the aristocracy (including the learned professions), the class of merchants and craftsmen, and the "people," i.e. peasants, laborers, and others.

This type of school system can be characterized as follows: four years of elementary school for children between 6 and 9 years of age is followed by nine years at the Gymnasium for those who are meant to go on to university; besides this course of studies there is the six-year course of the Technical High School (Mittel-/Realschule), leading to "middle" positions in society and, finally, the six-year course (previously only four years) of the "ordinary high school" (Volks-/Hauptschule), the latter course of studies continues at the so-called Vocational Training School (Berufsschule) where, over three more years, all apprentices receiving practical training in industry, commerce, and the trades are given some theory-oriented training once a week for which they are released by their employers. That is where about 50% to 60% of the population with skilled manual or middle-range clerical functions receive their vocational instruction.

The difficult and long process of changing the traditional school system into a horizontally structured, triple-leveled Comprehensive School (Gesamtschule) was not initiated until the mid-sixties. The speed at which this more comprehensive system is being introduced in the Länder varies considerably; several decades will pass until it will be fully introduced. It is particularly for this reason that this report must focus on the traditional structure of the educational system because it still determines decisively the context of political education--in spite of all the changes that have taken place in recent years.

This system has its origins in the traditional German philosophy of education. It is primarily determined by the social situation prevailing during the early 19th century when it was felt necessary to replace, or at least to supplement, the aristocracy by a class of properly trained persons who would be willing to serve the state. The new system had been developed during the time of Napoleon I by patriotic neo-humanists in their fight against French hegemony and the pedagogic ideas of the Enlightenment. That is why this philosophy of education possesses an anti-utilitarian character: a truly valuable education, it claims, can only be attained if it is not confounded by an outside purpose;

thought is more important than action; the general is given preference over the particular. It is for those reasons that this educational philosophy, mainly because of its contemplative and reflective character, has been conducive to academic achievements of world-wide importance and to the development of an exemplary secondary school system. At the same time, however, it also encouraged the development--divorced from political activity--of an elite of strong personalities equipped for that purpose. Those were harmoniously educated, well-balanced persons who, in spite of their superb empathy for foreign civilizations, nevertheless failed in critical moments when faced with the realities of power, whereas the pioneers in the economic field received an education which was essentially autodidactic (c.f. Eugen Lemberg on "Educational Ideology," Pädagogisches Lexikon, Bertelsmann).
The Gymnasium, in spite of its cultural comprehensiveness, remained alien toward politics, social studies, and economics; the Technical High School aimed at equipping its pupils with qualifications necessary for a technological mastery of life, but it avoided critical reflection; the "ordinary high school" restricted itself to the teaching of basic skills and folk culture.

The school system was and still is selective, particularly in the sense that it contributes to the continuation and support of a traditional social hierarchy. It is mainly responsible for the fact that the percentage of students in the Federal Republic coming from a working class background has not reached much more than 12.5% in 1971.

In the Gymnasium, which stamps its unmistakable mark on the leading groups of German society, the main teaching effort concentrated on the so-called major subjects: German, ancient and modern languages, and mathematics--all of which were compulsory and were taught throughout the whole course of studies. All other subjects (today no longer called minor subjects), such as physical education, biology, geography, or history, were more or less accessories; they had to be satisfied with a smaller number of teaching periods and were less important for the pupils' final assessment, their "maturation" (Abitur).

Social studies, too, has to contend with the impeding conditions of its supplementary status; the same holds true for such new subjects as Community Studies or Study of Society--combinations of history, geography, and social science (taught in the final grades of the Gymnasium or other secondary levels) which will not find it easy to improve their peripheral position in the face of the emphasis on the traditional major subjects mentioned above.

5. Organization of Teaching: School Performance and Assessment

Until a few years ago, that is, until the introduction of a course system for the final grades, there was very few optional subjects in the German schools. The student was obliged to follow a rigid program of subjects in accordance with the particular emphasis in the respective type of Gymnasium--classical languages, modern languages, or natural sciences. As a rule, participation was compulsory, but there were

exceptions: for example, the presentation of a doctor's note in sports or, after the age of fourteen, the chance to opt out of religious education (split in Germany mostly into catholic and protestant sections, both offered in the public schools).

In the major subjects the student's assessment is based mainly on the results of written tests, in the supplementary subjects on oral performance; so-called objective tests, customary in America, were unknown and are scarcely used even now.

Therefore, judgment on student performance depended to a far greater extent than in America on the teacher's personal preferences, especially in so far as they showed themselves in his choice of topics and questions and in his assessment of student performance.

In the teaching and methods of assessment the German teacher enjoys considerable freedom which, one might say, is documented by a characteristic outward and visible sign: the classroom door, made of solid wood and absolutely impenetrable so that nothing can be heard in the hallway; it remains closed during teaching, whereas the glass doors of an American high school often remain open. This may be taken as a symbol for the fact that class sessions are carried out not in public but in a specific atmosphere of class intimacy, seldom intruded upon by visits of colleagues or administration officials. Only during the Abitur, the final exams at the Gymnasium take place before a restricted public when the performance of teachers and students is finally checked by school authorities and colleagues. There is also a hidden public which takes a certain influence through more or less unreliable hearsay reported by students, teachers, and parents about the school and its instructional methods. Only over the last few decades the influence of a wider public has been enforced through feedback from parents and student associations; finally, in the new organizational forms of the Comprehensive School and the system of course electives a new openness is developing among teachers through frequent departmental meetings or discussions among those teaching the same grade.

Nevertheless, it remains a fact that in the German school, in contrast to the French or Russian systems which dictate every detail of method and content to the teacher, the German teacher has maintained a high degree of independence. As long as he helps his students to achieve an impressive school-leaving certificate and does not disturb the organization of teaching in the system as a whole, it is largely left to his own discretion to choose content and method within the limited frame of prescribed subjects.

The picture presented here of the range in which the teacher is allowed free choice is confirmed by the unique nature of the Abitur which, by and large, allows the teacher (and sometimes the student) to decide what should be examined. Admittedly, this charitable but questionable characteristic has recently been put to a severe test through the obligatory limitation of student numbers admitted to popular university degree programs (Numerus clausus). Limiting student immatriculations in certain subjects such as medicine demands uniform standards which

must allow an assessment of each school leaver's performance on the basis of comparable and quantifiable data. However, since the Abitur examinations are largely a matter of the individual school and the individual teacher, this amounts to comparing quantitatively what cannot in fact be compared at all. Since there is no likelihood of the Numerus clausus being lifted in the near future, the traditional Abitur will in all probability have to be replaced or supplemented, at least in part, by centralized examinations and assessments, or by objective tests.

6. Educational Autonomy in the Federal System

In contrast to countries such as France and Russia, there is no central institution in the Federal Republic which determines educational matters. This constitution only says that the school system as a whole would be under the supervision of the state, meaning here the eleven Länder governments. In principle, this federalist structure gives the German school system a great deal of inner mobility and diversification which, as is obvious, are then being limited through the activities of the Federal bodies which must ensure the equality of living conditions for all citizens.

A certain degree of uniformity in the development of the school system is effected by the "Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education." As has been shown, their decisions are in fact recommendations arrived at not on the principle of a majority vote, but by way of consensus, leaving their implementation a responsibility of each state and its school authorities. This makes negotiations difficult but guarantees the cohesiveness of the whole.

This state of affairs may explain the degree of conformity within the West German school system today; it does not, however, explain how it happened that during the Weimar Republic, upon which the Federal Republic is partially modelled, and also during Imperial times, there was already a great deal of conformity--this in spite of the fact that the responsibility for each education system in those days also rested with the Länder whose economic, social, cultural, and psycho-social structures were far more divergent than is the case today.

There is a simple answer to this question: Prussia played the leading role in the German Reich, and it was Prussia which had the necessary resources as a major European power to develop an education system which was a model in its time. Thus it was easy for the other states to adopt Prussia's exemplary solution (but sometimes also that of other important states like Bavaria or Saxony). A witty illustration of this can be found in Thomas Mann's novel The Buddenbrooks where the author gives a satirical description of the new Prussian spirit entering the Gymnasium at Lübeck--a Free Hanseatic City before 1870--and stressing pragmatic modernity over classical antiquity.

The slow advance of reforms in the German school system in our time, even when they were recognized as necessary, may have something to do with the fact that none of the Länder seem to have been in a position --possibly neither in an intellectual nor in an economic sense--to

assume Prussia's role as pacemaker. That is why the federalist structure of the German school system has been undeniably marked by pedagogical stubbornness and administrative inefficiency.

By contrast, the European and the German observer of the American scene is struck by the comparatively much higher degree of conformity and readiness for change in the American school system in spite of its more advanced decentralization. This may have something to do with the fact that the school in that country is less a matter of the state than of the local community, less a matter of the school authorities than of the teachers, the parents (and their associations) and the pupils. Also, American parents--as a result of their direct financial expenditures for their schools--are often intensely interested in their well-being.

In the Federal Republic funds for the school system--with the exception of the few private schools which are also subsidized by the state--do not come from school fees collected from parents but are paid out of the large purse of the states, also partly from community budgets which every taxpayer supports through many general, though few specific contributions. Therefore, what is lacking in Germany is a direct, concrete interest in the school system stimulated by the financial interest on the part of each citizen in the community. In America, decisions on curricular and instructional matters as well as on school equipment and teachers' salaries are grassroots decisions, i.e. they are codetermined by those who are directly concerned. In Germany, those decisions are taken practically without any participation by those directly affected, namely in the school administration departments of the ministries of education and in the state or local budget committees (with the possible exception of construction and maintenance which are usually local matters).

In matters of school funding the state legislatures and the communal councils have the last word. But as far as important curricular decisions on teaching and learning objectives as well as methods are concerned, these are in practice not under parliamentary control. They are the domain of school administration bureaucracies in each state. In the Hessian controversy over the new curricula, particularly for social studies and German, this fact has been made clear in no uncertain terms by their opponents (mainly Christian Democrats) and has remained undisputed by those supporting the new curricula, especially among the ranks of the governing party (the Social Democrats). The Länder constitutions contain only very few substantial directives for teaching, demanding --in accordance with the experiences during the era of National Socialism --the observance of tolerance and academic objectivity. It is through this type of authority over the schools, mainly through the prerogative for the setting of educational objectives and practices, that a relict typical of the authoritarian state has survived into our times which has remained practically without parliamentary controls. The absolutist state of the 17th and 18th century was in a position to dictate to its citizens what was good for them.

It seems clear that things are not quite as simple as that any more. Even if legislators believe they have no say in such decisions, partly as a matter of habit, but also because of an imagined lack of knowledge about the subject, the public at large (...) the voices of certain organizations are becoming more and more influential. Parents' and teachers' associations in particular are making themselves heard more often. Also, the larger newspapers as well as the media are now much more interested in educational matters than they were twenty years ago. Nevertheless, public interest in education is considerably lower than that in America. It must be added that, in spite of the "Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education," there have been strange breakdowns in communication and cooperation between the Länder in certain fields. Thus, the Ministry of Education of Rhineland-Palatinate announced in the mid-fifties that they were then first in introducing politics as a subject into their schools. They obviously did not know that this had already been accomplished in Hesse ten years earlier, namely in the late forties. The point of the story, though, lies in the fact that the Ministry of Education of Rhineland-Palatinate is in Mainz, that of Hesse in Weisbaden, and that these two cities, admittedly separated by the Rhine, lie within three miles of each other and are connected by solid bridges and other modern means of communication.

For the long-established and mainly factual subjects, such as languages, mathematics, and natural sciences, a basic consensus has been reached over the years on learning objectives and methods. For political education as a relatively new field in the German schools and in the context, moreover, of a society which thinks of itself as pluralistic, such a consensus will certainly not be attainable without a considerable effort, particularly if one wants to hold fast to the principle that curricula are produced in any by the individual state (as is spelled out in the Basic Law). As some of the smaller Länder show--for example, Bremen with its left-wing government and its left-wing university, or the Saarland and Schleswig-Holstein with their Christian Democratic governments--it is certainly not easy to present a suitable curriculum for social studies. Such a presentation of the present state of the discussion on basic principles of political, academic, theoretical, and pedagogical aspects is even more difficult if one must also consider adequately the needs of practical teaching and construct the curriculum in such a way that it will meet with agreement from experts and laymen over a longer period of time.

It is quite obvious that this is one of the more difficult joint tasks because the foundations of society must be defined for the present and the future. In all probability it cannot be solved eleven times in eleven different states at the same time and to everyone's satisfaction and agreement, although it concerns also that which they have in common. The most obvious solution would be the creation of a central institute for curriculum planning under the auspices of the "Standing Conference." Its recommendations could then be examined by the legislative and executive branches in each state; they could be adopted,

altered, or expanded in accordance with their needs. This solution has not yet been tried, obviously because of their concern for the principle of state autonomy in the field of education, even though it may well be the only possible solution.

7. The Program and the Framework

It is perhaps plain from the above why not very many concrete observations can be offered about the results of teaching in the field of politics and social studies in German schools. Empirical studies dealing with the results of political education from the beginning of the sixties have given the impression that not too much has been achieved in the direction of the intended change in attitudes regarding more democracy, less prejudice, and a greater readiness to criticize and to participate in the political process.

We know of no reliable empirical study on the results of less affirmative teaching or teaching that aims at information about decision-making processes and less about institutions--interests which became characteristic in the sixties. The unmistakable move to the left among young intellectuals and the student population, which began about a decade ago and is apparently shifting now, certainly did have something to do with political education, mainly at the Gymnasium. But it is an open question whether this is to be seen as a direct effect of this instruction or as one of the manifold forms of protest which perhaps had its source at the school, but which also aimed against tradition and the existing order in a more general way. The contrast between the "new wine" of political education and the "old bottles" of the traditional school system in which it was taught certainly induced protest, and is perhaps still provoking it today.

In the opinion of the "Standing Conference" the school is generally responsible for those tasks which specifically determine the objectives of political education:

"In the formulation of objectives for teaching and education the state constitutions, laws, and legislative as well as administrative regulations--including education plans--show a wide-ranging consensus. The schools should

-- teach knowledge, skills, and abilities;
-- enable the student to make independent, critical judgments, to act according to his own judgment and to be capable of creative activity;
-- educate for tolerance, regard for the dignity of others, and respect for other opinions;
-- foster a peaceful disposition in the spirit of international understanding;
-- give the student an understanding of ethical norms and of cultural and religious values;
-- stimulate willingness to undertake social action and accept political responsibility;
-- enable the student to avail himself of his rights and to

take up his duties in society;

-- inform the student about conditions of the sphere of work."

The variety of objectives corresponds to our society which we understand as being pluralistic, but at the same time the consensus points to our common basic convictions.

What is here presented as a task of the school in general is at the same time particularly relevant to political education: the imparting of knowledge (and also modes of behavior) necessary for the orientation of the future "emancipated citizen" from whom, as a member of "the people" --in the words of the Basic Law--"all statutory power proceeds" and which should enable him to make competent decisions on matters common to all in the complex and ever-changing relations with state and society.

This high aim for political education is supposed to be realized by teaching done within the limits of a modest number of hours: in one or two weekly lessons of social studies at the Secondary Stage I; in three to five lessons in Studies of Society (integrated teaching of social studies, history, and geography) in the last two years of Secondary Stage II or the Gymnasium. Those lessons should not deal with institutions in an externalized, merely informative manner promising, as it were, a systematic and continuous approach at the cost of lost student motivation, but, using concrete experiences of the students as a starting point, should teach relevant processes of political decision-making.

This approach is being followed mainly by teachers whose academic training was in history and geography, not in the social sciences; however, the number of younger teachers who have studied political science as their first or second subject and, to a smaller extent, sociology, is increasing. The courses of study for teachers at the Primary, Ordinary High School and Technical High School levels--those at the Primary Stage and Secondary Stage I--usually set higher requirements for a basic familiarity with the social sciences than do those for teachers at the Gymnasium--those at Secondary Stage II.

Finally, there remains a great deal of catching up to be done in this field, primarily a very necessary supplementary course of studies for those who teach social studies (or: Studies of Society) but who have not had special training in this subject, but also for those who have been, or are, studying it because until now there still is no consensus on what an adequate academic course in social studies should look like. The difficulty lies in the proper coordination of those basic studies necessary--from an ideal point of view--in modern history, politics, sociology, economics, and law so as to form a meaningful whole. At the same time, such a course of studies should provide for possibilities of studying a second subject needed at the schools, such as German, a foreign language, mathematics, or a natural science. The recommended set of examination regulations for social studies defined a few years ago by the "Standing Conference" was confined to the disciplines of politics, sociology, and economics; modern history was taken into account, but law was left out altogether.

It is possible that in the field of distance studies, which have an important compensatory function to fulfill in this respect, a course of study and examination regulations will emerge which will contribute to the urgently needed coordination in this area.

8. Practice and Routine: Teaching Materials and Teaching Aids

As far as content and method are concerned, this subject, perhaps more so than others, has to reckon with the external conditions of routine within the school.

As far as routine is concerned, we must distinguish between two types of teachers: younger teachers on probation during their eighteen-month student teaching assignment, and tenured teachers. Whereas the probationary teacher has been conditioned to include in his teaching effort the latest developments in the ongoing pedagogical and methodological discussion (this also because that was part of his examinations), the tenured teacher will probably choose the line of least resistance. He will rely on what he has studied and learned as well as on personal experiences which all too often lack critical reflection and examination. So he usually falls back on that which is offered to him and which appears to give him a chance to teach in a methodologically irreproachable manner, i.e. by means of the textbook.

The pedagogical and methodological discussion very rightly tends to question the validity of using textbooks, especially in political education where content is constantly changing and where it is necessary to adapt it to the actual conditions and needs of the moment. Textbooks tend to support the status quo--that is, conditions which are in reality changing continuously. That is why a "project method" is recommended which is to stimulate the "learning groups." They are to work out independently and cooperatively a problem they have chosen on their own by procuring the necessary material without outside assistance. But in practice the textbook remains the determining factor in teaching, particularly because it contains the promise of delivering the whole in a nutshell. Another reason may be that the purchase of textbooks is not left to parents or students but to the state administration in accordance with its system of providing textbooks free of charge to the students. For fiscal reasons, too, the textbook is generally given priority over other learning materials, since this is easier for bookkeeping purposes and possibly also cheaper in the long run.

However, the textbook in the field of social studies is generally better than its reputation. Textbooks must be so designed that they are acceptable for use in schools in their various states with possibly different political profiles, i.e. they have to take into account varying educational plans and curricula. This forces authors and publishers to adopt an approach which, in comparison with some syllabi, is more like a synopsis. The textbook must try to take into account conflicting positions by presenting both sides of the controversy; by reducing the problem to its elements it must, at the same time, develop a didactic structure which is to motivate the student and to remain transparent

and comprehensible.

It is not easy to fulfill the demands set by official standards and the constraints of marketing and profitability, and so it is no wonder that only a few textbooks and authors have managed to establish themselves in this coveted market. Violent controversies have broken out among the public about various well-known textbooks with regard to their alleged bias towards the one or the other political position. On occasion they have brought about considerable changes in attitude and terminology. This shows that the public has indeed grasped that the textbook has a high status in the field of political education, a status which will probably not be reduced in the near future; it also shows that in this field a feedback is already operating which is often still to be missed in educational state regulations.

But public institutions, too, obligingly supply the teachers of political education in the Federal Republic with ancillary materials. The Munich Institut für Film und Bild in Wissenschaft und Unterricht (FWU) which produces audio-visual materials for educational purposes and evaluates hardware is directly responsible to the "Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education." It makes available, through local Audio-Visual Material Centers in the various states, slide series, films, and audio-materials with accompanying notes for the teachers. Any teacher can have these materials sent to him free of cost from local depositories.

In May 1974, the Institute gave itself regulations for the production of materials in order to protect them from possible manipulative misuse. On the one hand, they defined clear parameters:

"The Institute performs informational and pedagogical tasks. In its relations with the educational institutions it is to perform service functions; its purpose is therefore neither the formation nor propagation of public opinion or of personal statements, nor does it serve the self-realization of the producers."

On the other hand, they give a precise definition of the Institute's task:

"Productions relevant to political education must aim primarily at enabling the individual to adopt well-substantiated positions on political matters and to stimulate readiness to take social action and to assume political responsibility. Those productions may not take sides in controversial political questions. Facts and analyses must be clearly separated from opinions; it must also be made clear that the opinions given are not the only possible ones. Matters which are controversial must be presented as such."

The Federal Agency for Political Education and the corresponding central offices in each state also function as suppliers of materials for the classroom and background materials for teachers. As such, they are at least as important as the other sources. Since these agencies are meant to be above party politics, one may expect of their materials that they are produced in accordance with the same basic principle as the self-imposed regulations of the Munich Institute. However, we do

not yet know of any specific formulation of such principles by those agencies.

The production by the agencies for political education of copious and useful publications is considerable; the necessary sums of money run into the millions of marks, which can be viewed with some pride. In view of this, the real difficulty for the practicing teacher should lie not in the lack, but in the superabundance of materials, in the embarras de richesse, because political organizations as well as industrial organizations and unions also see in political education a useful field for advertisement and public relations work.

The publications of the Federal Agency are sent out on request to schools and teachers free of charge. The same goes for the productions of the agencies in the various states, although they are obliged for fiscal reasons to restrict their gifts to citizens of their own state.

How does the teacher inform himself about the usefulness of the numerous offers of teaching aids and materials for the classroom available from public institutions, churches, business organizations, and unions as well as from commercial publishers? This problem has not yet been solved satisfactorily. Indeed, reviews of new publications which are important for the teacher appear in the daily press and in weekly magazines, in the weekly journal Das Parlament published by the Federal Agency for Political Education, and in journals published by commercial enterprises such as "Contemporary Studies" or, more recently, "Didactics of Political Education." However, a careful and systematic evaluation of teaching materials with regard to the needs of the practicing teacher is still lacking.

The same embarras de richesse is valid for the whole wide field of political pedagogy. Those who hold chairs in political education and in didactics of political education, which have been instituted at almost every German university and teacher training college, have contributed in no small measure to this abundant production over the past few years. In addition to several series of hardcover and paperback books, there are also publications on themes in political education not only in the journals mentioned but also in a whole range of pedagogic journals in the Federal Republic. Only a few years ago, they outnumbered by a considerable amount those daily papers which had remained independent.

In the sixties, the Frankfurt Study Bureau for Political Education attempted with some success, supported by the Federal Agency for Political Education, to bring out a collection of abstracts of everything relevant to political education found in German educational periodicals. Later on, the Federal Agency by means of a periodical under the title Informationen zur Politischen Bildung which it then supported far more generously than the abstracts project, had hopes of producing a kind of "Reader's Digest for Political Education" meant as an instrument of teacher orientation. This digest was intended also for adult education. The results so far are not particularly encouraging. Judged on the basis of teaching and classroom need, the instrument created still falls short

of the intended usefulness and practicability. It seems that a truly successful instrument can only be realized with the support of an academic central institute operating on a national basis. Such an institution, which does not yet exist, should deal with pedagogical and methodological problems in the field of social studies. As mentioned before, such an institution would also offer itself as a technically feasible solution to the various curricular problems, but it seems difficult to establish due to the viscosity of West Germany's political system in educational affairs.

9. Teaching Content and Teaching Method

Nowadays we have reason to believe that attitudes and patterns of behavior are not only influenced through cognition and the mediation of content, but also quite substantially through the contextual framework in which they are being mediated.

The organization of teaching in the German school and the forms of school activities in the Federal Republic favor the preservation of patterns of interaction which are "autocratic" (in the terminology of Kurt Lewin) and which have been characteristic of German political culture for a very long time. Here and there attempts are being made to adapt the formal aspects of teaching to teaching content. But the results remain problematic as long as they are restricted to this type of instruction and are not applied to the school as a whole.

It is characteristic of instruction in the German school that it is primarily oriented toward the subject matter and that the students are disciplined in this respect. Fostering the ability of the individual student to concentrate is receiving special attention because each student finds himself in continuous competition with his classmates. This concentration on the learning materials rather than on the learners is being accomplished in the context of the teacher's authority. It is generally he who decides on the theme, leading into it in his teaching approach and assessing the results of working on it. Thus, the emphasis on objectivity and on factual content by the German student is determined by external authority.

The well-adjusted, partner-related cooperation of both the teacher and his students when dealing with the same theme at the same time is still underdeveloped. The creation of cooperative forms of learning among the students is not only hindered by internal competition, but also by the strong, external position of authority held by the teacher. It comes as no surprise that the present generation of students is also trying hard to overcome difficulties in cooperating with each other.

There is more solidarity in illegitimate than in legitimate areas. Students stick together in so far as they copy from each other, and they are in a situation of latent protest against a school system which restricts their development through widely used advanced programming.

Learning being mostly a matter of imitation and identification, the mannerisms of the omniscient teacher and, later on, that of the eminent university teacher is still being imitated, particularly

linguistic behavior. This leads to difficulties in communication, especially for those who do not belong to the same group of "educated persons." In the traditional German system "democratic" or "socially integrative" patterns of interaction (again following Kurt Lewin's terminology) are hardly used, let alone encouraged.

Among the New Left this led to the absurd consequence that a movement, which was quite honest in a subjective sense, tried to attain a stregthening of those democratic attitudes which were postively inclined toward communicability and solidarity. Another, equally absurd consequence was that the New Left proved apparently unable to avoid the forming qualities of the authoritarian school and the university system, thus setting up communication barriers through its very means of language and interactional articulation vis-a-vis those whom it tried to win over to Marxism. It was probably this apparent inability to overcome those communication barriers which induced that movement to seek the true causes for this dilemma not among itself, but rather in the hated system of private ownership of the means of production. These revolutionaries behave in a strangely conservative way--unless they are throwing bombs (which very few of them do). The self-image of the New Left apparently demands that it should know everything (not unlike the teacher before his class or the old-guard professor); that it should, at the most, come to an agreement with equally knowledgeable colleagues; and that it should tell the unemancipated and the ignorant what they have to do. Consequently, the negative response of the working class to this elitist behavior is rather frustrating for the members of the New Left.

10. Prospects for the Future

Political education is trying to achieve at least this: its original intention having been to help prepare the foundations of a democratic German political culture through and within the school, it attempted to structure teaching content in an adequate manner in relation to subject matter and historical time, thus doing in fact what religion, philosophy, or the classical languages had done during earlier epochs; furthermore, it set out to apply the new political culture and its possibilities to a study of society (Gesellschaftslehre) in so far as the latter would mediate reason in a "substantive," not merely an "instrumental" manner. However, not very much has so far been achieved of those high aims.

Covert elitism, which belongs to our inherited psycho-social structure and which has now come to the surface again, was not the only hindrance. It was far more the resistance of the whole psycho-social structure of school and social conditions which still carries the stamp of the authoritarian state, a structure which was underestimated right from the beginning, or perhaps was not even properly perceived. Only experience produced the insight that the new school subject alone was not sufficient, that political education also means school reform, and school reform a reform of society--and that this reform must not stop

at the institutional level, important as this may be, but that it must also, and primarily, make inroads into the field of interactions, i.e. the domain of human communication.

Work in the area of political education, reform initiatives, and educational reform have run into additional difficulties lately, not only because they have made little progress and were not really convincingly thought out and planned, but moreover because of the approaching serious financial crisis. Thus it is perhaps time to use the breathing space offered by these external conditions to consider carefully how we might eliminate some of the obvious, but apparently reparable fruits in our strategy for altering and improving the framework of conditions of political education and of educational policy. Much of this may be illuminated by a consideration of American conditions:

1. Despite the much greater spatial dimension and the considerable importance of local institutions there, it seems to be easier for the Americans than it is for us to establish communication and cooperation between actively involved and progressive people in the education sector --be they in school administration, in educational research, in teaching pedagogics, in school teaching, or in educational organizations. In Germany, on the other hand, a distinct lack of connections prevails between all these people, emphasized even more by the state boundaries. Perhaps there are American approaches to this problem which could facilitate the alleviation of such deficiencies in communication.

2. The same applies to the cybernetic feedback system operating between the "experts" and the "laymen" mentioned--that is, primarily the parents and the general public. Admittedly, under the pressure of increasing grievances in the field of education, we can observe in Germany today, particularly in the media, a greater readiness to consider questions of political education and educational policy than was the case ten years ago. This by no means applies in equal measure to the daily and weekly papers, not even to the more serious ones. To this one might add that the invested effort and zeal of many progressively or radically inclined speakers in the media is quite often not matched by their professional competence, this in spite of their high proficiency in the use of academic language.

Suggestions on how to stimulate, intensify, and clarify the stream of information relevant to this subject would certainly be useful. In this attempt one should not fall victim to the general vice of underestimating the institutional framework. It appears as though the Americans have already managed to create what one might call "counter-institutions" which have shown themselves capable of breaking down and mitigating the restraints of outdated, traditional institutions. Perhaps we could learn from this.

Original translation by M. Winck,
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Reaction to Friedrich Minssen's Presentation

Wayne Dumas

In reacting to Dr. Minssen's excellent and wide-ranging paper, I thought that I might perform a somewhat useful service at this point by focusing upon some of the potential pitfalls of communication and understanding which are inherent in what we are doing here. If this conference consisted entirely of Americans we would experience a great deal of miscommunication and misunderstanding, but when you reach across oceans, languages, and cultures for understanding, the problems are considerably magnified.

First, there is some risk of miscommunication even in the focal term of the conference, Politische Bildung or Political Education. The German view of this expression may tend to be a bit broader and more inclusive than the American view. It is my impression that the term is frequently used by German educators in such a way as to be essentially synonomous with our term Social Studies. Political education in Germany is a comprehensive idea including the study of all of man's social relationships and ideas; whereas for many Americans present it may imply a more limited study of governmental structures and the relationships of people to structures--or it may imply courses in government, political science, and civics.

Dr. Minssen several times referred to German courses in social studies and the "study of society." It should be understood by Americans that there are at least two terms used in German education for specific types of courses which translate as "social studies." Though there are many variations among the German Länder, most German students take three courses of the social education type for about two hours weekly during most of the years of their secondary schooling. These courses are history, geography, and Sozialkunde, the latter being one of those courses translating as social studies. Sozialkunde is most nearly comparable to the traditional 9th grade American Civics course. This course is one of those referred to by Dr. Minssen as developing since WWII for largely political education reasons. In addition to this, students who attend the Gymnasium generally take a four or five hour per week course during the last two or three years of their studies entitled Gemeinschaftskunde, "The Study of Society." This course, as Dr. Minssen indicated, is intended to unify previous studies of Sozialkunde, history, and geography. The course as I have been able to observe it in Hesse is basically a political philosophy course. In summary on that point, we should at least be clear that the terms social studies and Politische Bildung often have different references for German and Americans.

Secondly, as we begin talking about political education, even with the same general context reference, I will be surprised if American educators aren't more frequently thinking about pragmatic governmental structures, political behavior of people and of leaders, or in essence, political science. German educators, on the other hand, may more frequently be thinking in terms of political philosophy, alternative theories of political, social, and economic systems, and intellectual authority. I think that some of our sharing with respect to this difference between our systems may be most valuable. I find it disconcerting that many American students and teachers seem inclined to view any theory or idea conceived more than five years ago as irrelevant.

Thirdly, the relationship between the political parties and political education which Dr. Minssen referred to on several occasions in his paper is quite different in Germany and the United States. The American political parties generally take no positions and exert no influence whatever in the shaping of political and social education curriculum. The German parties, on the other hand, seem to be major factors in determining the directions taken in education in general and political education in particular. The controversial new political education or social studies curricula of the SPD states of Hesse and Northrhine-Westphalia and the continuing controversy over the comprehensive school movement are prime examples. Though both parties seem to me to share some common goals such as promoting equal opportunity, they seem to be quite far apart on procedures for gaining the desired ends.

Fourthly, as Dr. Minssen discussed methods and materials, I am reinforced in my impression that teaching methods or techniques are not generally considered in Germany to be essential components of a theory or pedagogy. Our most publicized theories of instruction have consistently interrelated content with processes such as inquiry, reflective thinking, and problem solving. The method is for Americans frequently a leg without which the stool will not stand. My experience has been that German teaching theory has generally been much more concerned with the question "What knowledge is of most worth?" and the related question of how it should be sequenced and organized. This thought was impressed upon me by a young Gymnasium teacher from Heidelberg who told me that American teachers seemed to him to be "obsessed with methods and technology" and "too little concerned with theory." It has been suggested by one of my colleagues that foreign observers in American classrooms are often treated to a sound and light show and a parade of "gimmicks," within which all substance is lost. Apparently we Americans believe this is what impresses people--and it does in essentially the way the young teacher from Heidelberg was impressed. The distinction seems to me to be that Americans, American theorists at any rate, view certain methods as critical and integral components of the curriculum; while German teachers, I believe, view variations in methodology or departures from the recitation method as unrelated to the curriculum itself, but as useful devices for motivating students, when and if it becomes necessary.

Finally, I think the top priority given by Dr. Minssen and German educators generally to the goal of political socialization or acculturation should be highlighted; also, perhaps, a couple of distinctions should be noted. Many German educators see an authoritarian strain as characteristic of the German culture, accompanied by a tendency to be apolitical or to take only a superficial interest in anything political --both of which, they feel, must be eradicated through the internalization of democratic ideas and attitudes. Americans, of course, share this goal with the Germans, but with us its priority has not recently been so high--or at least we do not have the same sense of urgency about it that I sense in German education. This is, of course, partly due to our experience on the basis of 200 years of democracy--but at present it is also related to a general decline in the priority given all civic education under the rising tide of political apathy and cynicism due most directly to Watergate, Vietnam, and the adventures of the CIA. It is accompanied by one of those periodic waves of radical humanism in education which seem to promote the goal of an optimally diversified society, unified in virtually nothing except the pursuit of individual interest and fancy--a society only as cohesive as impending external crises might demand. This partly positive phenomenon is certainly viewed by its advocates as "living democracy." But when schools and teachers eliminate entirely the teaching of any common or shared political concepts, experience, or bedrock political and moral values, as many of the schools in our part of the country are frankly doing, to pursue a "Let everyone do his own thing" curriculum, the bases for rational discussion and resolution of political and social issues may be dangerously undermined. This, I believe, is one of the cornerstones of democracy.

In summary, a democracy can be lost by either of us within a generation, and the threat is just as great from excesses of individualism as from excesses of authoritarianism. At this point, Americans are a bit more complacent about all of this than are the Germans.

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Additional Report on the Paper by Friedrich Minssen

Bernhard Sutor

While agreeing with the tenor of the presentation as a whole and with many of the details of Minssen's report, I would like to do this in the following paper:

1. place different emphasis in several points and add possibilities for integration, and
2. put together a few supplementary remarks and continuing questions.

1.1 The New Start After 1945

Political education did not only become a subject in its own right "on a wider scale in West Germany's school curricula" in the late sixties (p.2), it can already be found much earlier, as long ago as the early fifties, outside Hesse and the city states. In Rhineland-Palatinate, for instance, it was taught throughout the system from the 7th grade on, even if it was only for one lesson a week. According to No. 52 of the series of publications from the "Federal Central Office for National and Regional Information Services" (Bundeszentrale für Heimatdienst: Bonn, 1960), the subject has existed in all states since 1958. Therefore Minssen's remark on p.13, designed as an example to prove the lack of information exchanged between the states, can only be due to lapse of memory or a misunderstanding. I do not think it is right either to attribute the first efforts in the field of political education after 1945 solely to Social Democrat-ruled (SPD) states (p.2). In addition, a coalition of Social Democrats and Christian Democrats (CDU) ruled in Hesse from 1946 to 1950. In order to assess the beginnings justly one should on the one hand include official and semi-official documents (Resolution of the KMK, the Conference of Ministers of Education in 1950, of the German Committee for Education and Instruction from 1955, among others), and on the other hand register the difficulties more thoroughly, for example: "the tale of woe of non-military mentality in Germany" (Karl Buchheim); the change in the form of the state and claims of loyalty; the lack of democratic experience; the start of democracy twice with the inheritance of a lost war; the previous perversion of political upbringing; denazification and re-education; the "cold war" and fear of the Russians; the temporary nature of the Federal Republic and the problems connected with re-unification.

1.2 The School System

The Comprehensive School (Gesamtschule) should not be presented

as the only, generally accepted solution in the Federal Republic to the reform of the school system in operation since the middle of the sixties (p.9). There is, in addition, the concept of a differentiated, interpenetrable system of different types of schools which should not be identified with the old social-class school system. Its detractors see in it, as long as the comprehensive school does not show its superiority convincingly, a system more suited to a highly differentiated industrial society with its division of labor--a system which is in a position in any case to solve bearably the problems of unity and multiplicity, of the demands of all and the differentiation of performance, of equality of starting opportunities and freedom of individual development.

In the sense of this concept one might ask if it is still true that a segmented school system "contributes to the continuation and support of a traditional social hierarchy" (p.9). If this system was able to quadruple the number of school graduates in 15 years (Education Council, Final Report, July 1975: 20% per year; at the same time doubling the number of those with 10 years full-time schooling, from 22 to 45%), then one might ask if the restricting factors were not previously of a completely different nature. One might ask further, in terms of educational theory and in the interest of political education as well, if, by the overestimation of the numbers of school graduates and students in the last few years, the educational ideal of Humboldt had not achieved a late, indirect victory over vocation-oriented education.

1.3 School Sovereignty

I cannot see a relict of a purely authoritarian state in the fact that the state (here: the Länder) has the authority to determine educational goals and structures (p.13). It is democracy that needs an indispensable minimum of uniformity in education for the sake of equal opportunity and as measures of performance. This seems to me to be only realized through supervision by the state. One must also remember that "progressivists" in the fifties urged more uniformity in the German school system. However, the development of curricula has not yet succeeded in institutionalizing those methods in a way that would correspond with the consensus process recommended by the German Education Board consisting of participation by the science institutions and society.

2.1 The Reformed Upper Level at the Gymnasium

Connected with what Minssen says about the inner structure of the traditional Gymnasium (p.9f) I think it is necessary to give some supplementary information about the reform of the upper level of the Gymnasium taking place presently. I see its significance for political education above all in two points: Generally, it seems to me that here exists an approach that breaks with the prevailing institutional immobility of the school system, with the inflexibility of the timetable and the splitting up of the student body into age-groups, and with an educational

theory encouraging the encyclopedic accumulation of knowledge behind the canon of subjects. The upper level at the Gymnasium achieves mobility by introducing free-choice options and courses, and in using several afternoons per week there is scope for activities by voluntary work-groups and for student participation in administration. Of course it is necessary to see that here there is a series of unsolved organizational and didactic questions. More specifically, I feel that the KMK agreement of July 1972 on the reform of the upper level of the Gymnasium has made a breakthrough for political education: the "field of social-scientific tasks" has in principle equal status with the lingual-literary-artistic field and the mathematic-scientific-technical field. It may be several years before didactics and practice correspond to this. Nevertheless there are, for instance, already special five-hour courses in the area of social sciences at all Gymnasien in Rhineland-Palatinate.

2.2 Deficiencies in Primary (Elementary) School and Secondary School (I)

Politics (political science) as a subject carries maximum weight in the final classes of Secondary Level I and at Secondary Level II. The possibilities for its use in earlier grades have hardly been examined, nor have their limits been tested. This corresponds with an assumption which the sociologist Schelsky expresses thus: a way of behavior appropriate to secondary institutions can only be formed in youth, namely during the transition between the "social horizons" (The Skeptical Generation, 1963, p. 30ff.). G.C. Behrmann commented on this (GSE, 1969, p. 158) that Schelsky had overlooked the fact that primary groups can already be found between these horizons, but he does concede the possibility that, especially in West Germany, there exists between unpolitical primary groups and the political public a gap which is being widened by starting political education late.

If this is right, the problem could not be solved merely by extending political education into the earlier grades. This would rather have to go hand in hand with intensive attempts to promote and increase parental participation at school, of which there is deplorably little at the moment; this participation would be at the base and related to their own children's grade and school. The rights of elected parental representatives to have a say at a higher level in school administration are not enough and are only of secondary importance.

2.3 Deficiencies in Vocation Oriented Education

Political education at schools providing a general education --particularly at the Gymnasium--is accused, to a large extent justifiably, of being obsessed with theory and oriented away from application, and generally lacking in practical activity. It is all the more regrettable that political education has obviously not succeeded either at vocational schools in reflecting those connections with the sphere of work that exist abundantly, particularly in the "sandwich course

system." I must qualify that by saying that I am not completely acquainted with the didactic literature on this subject, but as far as I can see, the textbooks on politics for schools providing vocational training are altogether much more strongly trapped in the old style of instruction than those at the Gymnasium, especially when it comes to social institutions and a harmonistic view of society. I see a point of departure for reflection about the connection between the professional and the working world and politics in curricular plans for "courses on the working world" at Technical High Schools. Of course, such approaches have been more obstructed than advanced in the past few years by radical, left-wing criticism of the existing economic system and its deficiencies, and above all by criticism of vocational training.

2.4 Objectives, Possibilities, and Limits of Political Education in Schools

Minssen stresses quite rightly the significance of forms of interaction. This, however, is a matter of principle--both with respect to types of schools and to classroom instruction in general--not a matter related only to specialized political education. I think I may be more optimistic than Minssen concerning the style of schools and the day-to-day situation in them, based on my observations in the past few years. Much has changed. Relations with the authorities, of the staff among themselves, and between teachers and pupils have changed. That is not so strange when one considers that we have acquired a completely new generation of teachers in the last decade. More than two thirds of all the teachers employed at the Gymnasium level in Rhineland-Palatinate took their first state examination in 1960 or later. We should not expect too much from this, but we should stop blaming the deficits in democratic behavior in society on an "authoritarian" or unsuccessful school system. Within the framework of the whole political socialization process what can be done through half-day schooling is, at least in most areas, very limited.

What can or should the school stress primarily in its position as one among many agencies for socialization? I believe it should emphasize the evaluative ranking of the relationships between knowledge and attitudes; it should educate so that national judgments can be made; and it should transmit propedeutic abilities and skills in a scientific manner. The latter are still being underestimated in the German school system but are more important than a lot of content-material in making life-long learning possible. Collectively, the objectives included here under the concept of political rationality are more important than certain "behavioral objectives"; they have been argued about long enough among the various camps in the past few years in the discussion about curricula. As Behrmann so aptly says, there are no functionally equivalent institutions for conveying political rationality in the transferred sense. This is the domain of schools; to demand more is to demand too much.

The high ethical aims and the behavioral objectives that Minssen quotes summarily (p.15) from constitutions, laws, and educational plans can no longer act in our schools as guidelines of orientation for the spirit and style of classroom instruction. They are in no way attainable exclusively through the school, rather only in the context of a society with a political culture. It is here where the existing, admittedly meagre empiric studies analyzing the results of political education in the classroom become problematic. They have been based too much on an idealistic concept of political education, as can be seen in the educational plans of the fifties--plans for the Federal Republic which date from a period of naivety in the social sciences. But critics are in the process of repeating the mistakes of those they criticize.

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